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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: THE REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT ANNETTE LU BY
AP AND CNN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's newspapers March 14 focused their coverage on the second round of negotiations chaired by President Chen Shui-bian, in which the four DPP bigwigs agreed to accept negotiations; participate in debates; and not withdraw from the party or run on their own if they are not nominated by the party as candidates for the 2008 presidential election. The other focus for today is the raids conducted by Taoyuan prosecutors at BenQ's headquarters in Taipei and its factory in Taoyuan in an attempt to investigate an alleged insider trading case.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the pro-independence "Taiwan News" editorialized that Vice President Annette Lu correctly filed sharp and correct protests to CNN and AP over the articles, but the response of the DPP camp to "expel" the AP reporter has seriously damaged the resolve of the DPP camp to defend one of its core values, i.e. '100 percent of news freedom.' An editorial in the pro-unification, English-language "China Post" also said that some DPP legislators' proposal to 'expel' the AP reporter is unwise and unproductive. The editorial also elaborated on the role of AP in the international media and drew the distinction between CNN.com from CNN. End summary.

¶3. The report of Annette Lu in the AP and CNN

A) "No Compromise on Press Freedom"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized that (03/14):

"Last week's flap over the controversial coverage by Cable News Network (CNN) and The Associated Press of Vice President Annette Lu's announcement of her bid for the presidency has seemingly ended with expressions of regret by both media and promises to offer more balanced reporting in the future.

"Unfortunately, few commentators have paid adequate attention to how narrowly Taiwan's own reputation for news freedom and human rights ducked a self-inflicted bullet.

"There is no doubt that primary responsibility for the controversy rests with CNN, which added an insulting headline - [Taiwan's 'scum of the nation' runs for president] - to the AP story on Lu's March 7 press conference that carried Hong Kong-based reporter Min Lee's byline.

"Lu correctly filed sharp and correct protests to CNN and AP over the articles, but the response of the DPP camp dangerously went off the tracks Thursday morning when DPP caucus whip Wang Sing-nan, saying that the language used in Lee's story was 'a terrible insult to any normal person as well as to the Taiwan people,' declared he would demand Foreign Minister James Huang and Government Information Office Minister Cheng Wen-tsang 'resign if they do not take action

to expel the reporter from the country.'

"Wang and four other DPP lawmakers stood up and waved their fists, demanding Min Lee to 'Get Out!' Lawmakers from the Taiwan Solidarity Union followed suit shortly afterward.

"In the end, Min Lee was not expelled, but there is no need for Taiwan policy makers or democrats to indulge in self-congratulation over this welcome result.

"After all, the events of Thursday exposed a grave lack of resolution in the DPP camp to defend one of its most absolute values, that of '100 percent news freedom' for which the late Freedom Era Weekly editor Cheng Nan-jung gave his life in April 1989 and which President Chen himself has declared is more important than national security.

"Frankly, we believe that the demand raised by the five DPP lawmakers for Lee's expulsion from Taiwan because of the content of his article was reprehensible and no less 'terrible' or insulting to Taiwan's democracy.

"We believe that it is simply inadmissible in a democratic country to call for the denial or restriction of news gathering rights for a reporter or the expulsion of a person from a country for the content of what she or he has written. The proper course is open rebuttal, protest or, if necessary, a libel suit.

"This lack of resolution allowed speculation about the possibility of such an action to persist for several hours Thursday and had already inflicted damage on the DPP's reputation.

"... We reaffirm our calls on domestic and international media to exercise professional quality and self-discipline to improve the quality and accuracy of their Taiwan coverage. But we no less earnestly urge the DPP government and party and its leaders never to AP AND CNN

forget how fragile Taiwan's reputation for human rights and news freedom is and act to ensure that such a shameful display will never happen again.

"The most important lesson is that commitment to fundamental political and moral values is most decisively demonstrated when such defense is at its most difficult."

B) "Leave the AP Alone"

The pro-unification, English language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in its editorial (03/14):

"In recent days, a furor has erupted over the treatment of Vice President Annette Lu by the foreign press.

"... The story and headline prompted outrage from Lu, and many lawmakers in Lu's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have demanded the government expel the AP reporter who wrote the story.

"In our view, taking such actions would be extremely unwise and unproductive. Rather than further ruin our democratic reputation by getting into confrontations with the international news media, our politicians should try to understand better how the international press operates.

"Indeed, this entire controversy is based around commonly held misunderstandings and misperceptions about the foreign news media.

"Perhaps most importantly, our politicians have a fundamental misunderstanding about what the AP actually is.

"The AP is not itself a media outlet, but rather a supplier of content to media outlets that pay a fee to subscribe to its service. The AP supplies stories to its clients, who can then change the content and add their own headlines, depending on how much space is available.

"Vice President Lu's demand that AP interview her is therefore ridiculous, since the AP's clients can simply choose not to run such

a story anyhow.

"... In addition, there is widespread confusion about the U.S.-based CNN.

"The media outlet than ran the 'scum' headline, CNN.com, is not exactly what we would ordinarily think of as 'CNN.' CNN.com is just the part of CNN that manages the network's web page content.

"It seems that anything carrying the CNN brand is the cause of ceaseless amazement to Taiwan's politicians, who are wither delighted or furious their names have been 'on CNN.'

"These people don't realize that there are a wide variety of operations bearing CNN's name. ..."

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